

Interview
PETER APO
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APO: (00:07)--and then what he had accomplished, you know, in terms of freeing us from the Big Five in a—in a sense, yeah? Um, yeah.

[GENERAL CONVERSATION]

QUESTION: (00:19)So let's start with talking about what your growing up was like during the Territory days.

APO: (00:36)Territorial days, uh, some of the—the—the uh, the really um ... memories that are etched in my mind was, one, we were a Maui family, myself and uh, three sisters and a brother. And we had moved from Maui, Lahaina, to Oahu on December 6, 1941. Yes. And on December 7th, of course we all know what happened. And we uh, moved into a little house uh, across from what is now I think the Montero Mexican Restaurant on the corner of Young and Piikoi Street. And so Kaahu—Kaahumanu School, which is on Beretania and Piikoi, um, there were bomb shelters there; these underground caverns that they—apparently they were expecting something to happen. So we spent our first uh, two days on Oahu in the—in a bomb shelter. And then uh, so that was my introduction, sort of, to the ... uh, to the ... I guess to Oahu, uh, you know, anyway. And then um, I went to Maryknoll School, but you know, tho—those were really—in spite of the war, that the war was going on, there was kind of a vibrancy. Um, I, of course, uh, growing up all that time wasn't aware of all the stuff that was going on, that—that really wasn't bad. The martial law, some of the effects of that. Because basically, our family was happy, you know, and uh ... my mom and dad worked at Pearl Harbor. Uh, they were friendly to military. It was a—it was a time uh, for very high patriotism. Uh ... and ... so every weekend for several years, at least during the war years, uh, my folks entertained uh, especially ... people from the Navy, made some lifelong friends. Um ... so I had been introduced to sort of mainland culture very early and uh, became uh, a real liberal when it came to uh, relationships with Haoles. You know, uh, they all seemed like good people to us, treated us really—really well and really nice. And that was the um, basis of my childhood, uh, was ... again, in spite of the war, it was—it was pretty happy time. Um ... camping at uh, Nanakuli every weekend with the family next door and ... uh, stuff like that. My brother had ... of course ... I guess that came later when he—my brother ended up in the Air Force; what was then the Army Air Force. 'Cause the Air Force, uh, was not a separate branch of the military. They operated under the Army and he spent some of those yeas in—in Europe. I'm like ten years um ... I'm the baby of the family and I'm ten years removed from my close—my ... my brother—or my sister was the closest. Um ... they were remarkable years. Uh, uh, you know, looking back now on it, um ... I guess

what I—I had no sense of what being Hawaiian was, because during the 40s and 50s, it was a time of assimilation. It was a time when um, we were supposed to as a native people uh, become Americans, so to speak. And everybody pretty much bought into that. So um, I was—I did—I didn't realize bo—both my parents were fluent speaker—uh, native speakers until I was thirty-five years old, been to the mainland and had—had come home, because they deliberately avoided speaking Hawaiian; we were supposed to learn to speak English. So the acculturation to Western society uh, was um, was successful, I would think, uh, for the people of my generation. Looking back on it now, uh, it saddens me a lot. In fact, I get a little angry sometimes of all the—th—the—the—the—the cultural vibrance that I could have had early on. And it took me a long time to really figure out who I was, although I didn't know that I didn't know who I was. Um ... I left after high school to go in the mainland, and again, looking back, kinda found myself trying to be Haole, you know. I mean, a lot of us were trying to be Haoles, because that's h—the—the standards were all set uh, by that. Um ... there's no sense of Hawaiianess, no sense of culture, no sense of tradition. Uh, uh ... s—s—some of—uh, some of it was there, but mostly it was through entertainment and having parties, and eating food. So the—the uh, you know, Hawaiian food was there, and of course we knew that was Hawaiian, we knew about kalua pig, you know, and lomi salmon, and bla-bla-bla, you know. But in terms of the—the deeper meaning of being Hawaiian and Hawaiian values, and what that meant, and um, and—and real heritage, especially uh, uh, missing the language, uh, was sad that we—that ... first thirty-five years of my life, I missed out on all of that. Um ... the politics here were largely, from my perspective, um, uh, military ... driven in the sense that because we were involved so much with military families, uh, um ... the family perspective kind of developed through that uh, uh, through that window. And it wasn't 'til really much later that we began to really kinda scrutinize ... we were able to separate the warrior from the wars, uh, uh, that um ... warriors have their job, but the uh, the leadership and um, those who lead the warriors are really critical that—that they operate with some values. Uh, so the—the development of Hawaii through that whole period uh, being ... knowing without question who really was in charge, the Big Five, the uh, the agrarian economy, the plantation, um ... uh, not understanding at the time, but now—understanding now that Hawaii's development ... economically particularly, that affected everything that happened in the islands was driven from the outside. It was not growth that emanated from the inside, and that every industry um ... that occurred in Hawaii really kinda occurred without the consent of the people. This is all in—in hindsight, of course, retrospect. So the character of Hawaii was really kinda driven from uh, outside boards of directors who sat thousands of miles away. You know, um ... even in the—in the case of the—of the Big Five. So ha—you know, ha—the globalization, I think, of the Hawaiian

economy had a profound effect on the economic growth and the political gr—growth uh, of the islands. And absent from all of that was any politicking going on in terms of the Hawaiian presence. Uh, so that period was—I—I guess could I say was sort of a period of innocence for so much of us uh, who were not really aware of what it meant to be Hawaiian, about values, about the fact that the business models uh, that were emerging and continue to emerge to this day was models that came at the expense of, in many instances, expense of the place and at the expense of the people. That the we—Western driven models of—of business were fairly colonial, not too much different from European—the early European models, very top-down, um, beginning with sugar where you had different wage scales depending on your ethnicity. Japanese were at the bottom of the barrel. Uh, Hawaiians were nonexistent in the sugar industry because they couldn't figure out why anybody would want--[CHUCKLE]--would want to go out and stand in the hot sun and cut cane, you know, for whatever amount of money. So ... but all the other uh, [INDISTINCT]. Um ... yeah.

QUESTION: (09:08) Let me ask you a question; take a slight change of direction. You know, when you had family gatherings or gatherings with friends from the Navy, do you recall any discussions that your parents might have had as a group about whether statehood would be a good thing, a change in the political relationship with the United States?

APO: (09:42) Not during the war years. Uh, the war years here was intense. This was the last friendly territory that these—that these military people were gonna see, and they were off to a very uncertain future. And uh, didn't know whether they were gonna come back. So you know, the—the—the ... um ... what was driving the relationships and the conversation of the moment was, good luck, you know, I hope—I hope to see you when you come back. And so tha—that didn't leave a lot of room, so there was very high emotion. And then of course, when people did come back and they would call, every—it was a tremendous celebration; again, high emotion. You know, you made it. [CHUCKLE] Uh ... so you know, that was like in 1941 through 45. It was uh—I don't know if ... people really appreciate that kind of—so Hawaii was very different. We—we were, I mean, right there in the middle of—of the war in terms of uh, last stop.

QUESTION: (10:47) And then by the time the war was over, you were getting ready to go into high school and ...

APO: (10:55) Yeah.

QUESTION: (10:56) Did you still have strong—your family still had strong relationships with military people?

APO: (11:03) Yeah; well, they continued to work at Pearl Harbor for a long—for a long time uh, uh, after that. And then of course, the post-war period was one of great celebration, uh, uh, tremendous hope. The country um, there was an awareness that the United States had—had—had ... as a result of it, successful uh, uh ... uh, you know, winning the war, uh, was now moving forward at a very fast pace toward becoming a global leader, a world leader, and the opportunities for Hawaii uh, were becoming more and more evident as a territory of the United States. So it was uh, it was a time of great hope, a time of great optimism, uh, lots of celebrating um, going on. But still, no—not much consciousness about Hawaiianess or—the Hawaiian presence, or injustice, or—or any of that uh, at—at the time. But then ... um ... after moving out of high school, when it was still—we were still a territory—I left high school in 1957 from Mid Pacific Institute, and moving to Eugene, Oregon where I went to the University of Oregon—Hawaii is still a territory. Uh ... and then were introduced—and there were a lot of kids that went to University of Oregon and Oregon State; they had reciprocal tuition waiver agreements with the University of Hawaii. So a lot of local kids ended up there. I'm talking like seven, eight hundred, you know, on campus. Um ... walked into civil rights; civil right was starting to really bubble under with uh, with the Kennedys. And so uh, being from Hawaii ... at the University of Oregon specifically, which was uh, kinda like—it was like the Berkeley of the Northwest, very radical, uh, um, big on protesting, student mo—you know, uh, all of that, questioning um, the uh ... all—all the mo—moral questions would come up. So we were all very swept up in that. So when you—when—when you talk about statehood, if you were there as a person from Hawaii, and you were caught up in campus activity that was very highly focused uh, and—and—and emotionally charged by the—by the civil rights movement, and then Vietnam, uh, which came a little later, but ... kinda the—oh, Ko—uh ... yeah, Korea had—I think had just ended. Um ... the question of statehood seemed almost irrelevant to us. Um, we weren't ... we couldn't see how anything was gonna change. Not that we wanted anything to change. Being an American citizen seemed pretty cool, uh ... the Territorial days, there were some wonderful moments that you know, came out of Territorial days. And other than um, uh, uh, than intellectually understanding that it was—it was really great that we get to vote for the President, it was really great that we get to vote for our own Governor, uh, et cetera, and the—the political changes uh, and uh, uh, that—that came about uh ... other than that, we—we couldn't see that it was gonna make a huge difference in lifestyle, in quality of life, uh, and Hawaii's economy, which in the 50s was still dominated by the Big Five. Um ... so for us that—for me, uh,

those—the—the moments of statehood le—both leading up to it and immediately after it sort of passed without incident. Without any intellectual incident in my mind. [CHUCKLE]

QUESTION: (14:47)And there was change, we went through a change.

APO: (14:55)Oh, yeah. It's—I mean, you know, we were uh, uh ... uh, I came home uh, finally in 1975 uh, after doing many, many things. And ... among the jobs that I had, I was really fortunate to uh, travel to every state in the union a number of times by plane, by rail, by air—I mean, by car. So I was intimately familiar with this country, and the fact that in fact, we were not one country, that the South uh, uh, the South is vastly different from the upper Midwest, and that the—the East Coast is so different from the West, and uh ... uh, and that there—there were these—these subcultures of America. And uh, so all of that was really um ... quite an interesting uh, uh, experience. But in terms of relating uh, you know, to Hawaii ... I come home in 1975, still not knowing what it meant to be a Hawaiian, having spent years and years, you know, trying to—to—to be Caucasian, esse—uh, essentially, and fit into the system. Uh ... come home, and I get off the plane and the first thing I saw was a—was the first Herb Kane poster of the Hokule'a. Which eventually came very, very famous, of the canoe broaching a wave, and then the leihulu flying in the wind and then the warriors on the deck. And I had never seen anything like that. It ... I mean, we didn't even know what voyaging was, or that there was such a thing. At least, I didn't. So that was a cultural uh, image that just really blew me away, and I had to find out what all that was about, 'cause it was obviously Hawaiian, right? So Hokule'a is—is happening, and the more I find out about Hokule'a ... then um, uh, uh, the Protect Kahoolawe Ohana, you know, George Helm, of course, is uh, just emerging on the scene and we're—and Hawaiians are charging the island, and uh, getting into confrontations with the United States Navy. And so the—the—those two things for people of my generation, we begin to look back on our—the first thirty-five, forty years in our lives, and realize we'd been duped. You know, that there were things going on that we were totally ... I like to use the word innocent, 'cause we didn't know any better, uh, that the education system never, you know, they—they were re—they did a great job in training us to think very Western, and to just accept. Um ... finding out about the injustices that were going on and—and—and beco—you know, learning more about our culture, uh, the—the various trusts, the commitment that the—even after uh, prior to statehood under the Territory, uh, looking at the history of the—the dismal record of the Hawaiian Home—Homes Act, and its total failure to uh, uh, to uh, live up to its trust responsibility, all the breaches of trust. So now ... I have dual memories of the period. I have really good memories that are personal memories, uh, that were

not tainted by such things as political considerations and justice, and seeking justice, and degradation of the culture or the misappropriation of the culture, and the, uh, I think um ... the—the sadness of the tremendous loss of opportunity, of an whole—an entire generation uh, of—of Hawaiians that—that really missed it. Um ... uh, so then you get angry. And it's interesting to kinda live this dual uh, dual history in—in—in—in my mind. And so you tend to uh, to try to be selective about the memories and you know, try to—still try to feel good about the era on the one hand. On the other hand, that makes you want to work twice as hard today to—to try to at least do our part, however late we may be, my generation we may be. Uh ... try to correct some of those things, you know.

QUESTION: (19:14)[INDISTINCT]

APO: (19:15)So—so—so then—then statehood takes on a different aspect, right? Now statehood, when you look at the Admissions Act and we begin to examine these things, and he—there's another trust; here comes the Ceded Land Trust. Uh, Hawaiian Homes is then transferred to uh, as part of the Admissions Act to the State as—as a responsibility to rehabilitate and put Hawaiians back on the land. Um ... then you begin to—to look at those things in a different light, and begin to realize that we really had an opportunity to cut a deal, okay, with—with the federal government, and that um, the loss opportunity that—was that Hawaiians were not at the table to actually ... more fairly define the relationship between Hawaii, its lost nationhood, and this new thing called statehood. Because the Admissions Act was the opportunity to do that, when the State makes a deal with uh, with the feds as to exactly what that relationship is gonna be, uh, and to deal with the questions of the illegal overthrow of Liliuokalani. So those were all opportunities that in the absence of—of Hawaiians uh, being politically active, politically strong, or akamai or got well educated, um, made it even more important uh, in post-1975 when the—when the Hawaiian renaissance begins to happen because of the Hokule'a and because of the uh, Protect Kahoolawe Ohana. Uh, now we're day late, dollar short. And of course, today in uh, 2006, uh ... the uh, the genesis of the—sort of the new Hawaiian consciousness, uh, that started back in 1975 is now being intensely played out. Um ... statehood didn't do anything to really ease the tension uh, uh, since the overthrow, the tension between the Hawaiian community and um ... and Hawaii's political institutions, Hawaii's economic institutions. Uh, and in fact, I think as we became more educated as to what the facts were, the uh, the tension grew uh, even more intense. And so you—you ended up with uh ... some very ... provocative uh, kinds of political posturing on the part of Hawaiians uh, w—wherever and whenever they're able to organize. Um ... the Center for Hawaiian Studies now, which was not even uh, not even an afterthought back then is now a reality.

Office of Hawaiian Affairs, um, gathering rights; all of those things that—that we had to sort of um, win ... uh, through political action. And so that—you know, that continues.

QUESTION: (22:22)Do you have any sense that this might—all of those kinds of struggles happened ... were more successful because we're a state? I mean, did any of that ...

APO: (22:48)I think it made it harder. Uh, statehood ma—makes it harder uh, because we cut a deal—or the State cut a deal. And—and we—we ... uh, for instance, I think if we had to do it over gain and renegotiate the Admissions Act, there'd be a lot of changes uh, that uh ... brings um, uh, that would ... create a ... basis for—for public policy development out of a—a ... redrafted Admissions Act that created more equality and more opportunities uh, for uh, uh ... better quality of life situations than—than—than it does now. Um ... although it occurred before statehood, one of the things that ,, that uh, you wa—you—you wake up and look back and you realize uh ... that the military, for instance, the Navy uh, controls two of Hawaii's most precious resources, the two greatest inland waterways that we have; Pearl Harbor uh, and Kaneohe Bay. And that ... the opportunity to renegotiate what the terms of that would be would have been the Admissions Act. But our consciousness was not up to s—uh, uh, up to uh, to meeting that challenge. Uh, Makua as a training area. So just the relationship between Hawaii ... being led by a Hawaiian consciousness and the loss opportunity to work out something that would have been more fair, and in exchange for using these precious natural resources of ours, and the federal government, uh, we cannot go back and redo now. That's gone, uh, although we try, and we protest. Kahoolawe to me was like uh, an amazing miracle that happened; took twenty years. I mean, if ... the—the—the reality of the time, you know, when George Helm first began the movement was, this was something that was never gonna happen, but damn it, we're gonna try anyway. I mean, we're gon—we—you know, we gotta stand up. Um, so twenty years later, when they actually—the signing ceremony that goes on on Maui where they're actually returning the island, I mean, we took on the greatest military industrial political complex in the world, and we won. That was ... [CHUCKLE] major. But that—um, it—it—statehood made that very difficult to do. You know, again, 'cause the deal was cut, right?

QUESTION: (24:55)Yeah.

APO: (25:40)Use of Kahoolawe by the Navy was ... all folded into the—the division of land.

QUESTION: (25:44)Uh-huh.

APO: (25:46)So ... uh, one thing that I think statehood did provide, though, is um ... as a result of the war, uh, all the ethnic minorities who had been discriminated against for years and years and years uh, under the agrarian uh, colonial—colonial management model um ... that ... it began to trigger a um, a backlash when all these ethnic minorities go off to war, they fight for the United States, and they come home after the war and they say, no more. You know, we—we want to be treated as equals. So enter uh, people like Dan Inouye, uh, uh, enter John Burns, and enter the Democratic Party, enter the labor unions, and uh, so that becomes a uh, uh, I think a very positive and revolutionary uh, revolutionary move—movement that I think had something to do with statehood. Because that was kind of part and parcel of going after statehood.

QUESTION: M-hm.

APO: (27:00)Was uh, was looking for equality and the uh, whatever constitutional guarantees that could emanate out of statehood that we would no longer uh, be treated like that in terms of ethnic minorities. So that uh, discrimination laws would uh, would be equally applied in Hawaii. So ... and it—it changed everything, obviously.

QUESTION: (27:44)Were you involved at all with the Constitutional Convention that happened [INDISTINCT]?

APO: (27:30)Only peripherally. I was not directly involved, no. But I was pretty aware of what was going on. Yeah.

QUESTION: (27:40)It didn't rewrite the Admissions Act, but it rewrote ...

APO: (27:42)Well, it—it—

QUESTION: (27:43)--a portion of the constitution.

APO: (27:44)It opened—it opens uh, a couple of really uh, very, very important doors. Uh, the creation of Office of Hawaiian Affairs, just the debate alone that went on uh, at the Constitutional Convention. And you know what I think uh, is ironic is that the chairman of the convention was Bill Paty. And Bill Paty was from the plantation. I mean, he was a uh, CEO. But Bill Paty was also a local boy, and Bill Paty was a guy who was highly decorated at—on uh, an—and one of the heroes of the—the Battle of Nor—the landing in Normandy. And Bill Paty um ...

um ... aligned with the Hawaiian constituency in—in—within the Constitutional Convention. Uh, because it was a tough sell and you had people like Frenzy DeSoto in there. John Waihee, of course, you know, cut his first big mark on the political landscape uh, at the Constitutional Convention. And so it was an important um ... it was an important moment in that the—the first real political block of Hawaiian power began to show itself, uh, in that Constitutional Convention. Of course, the uh, Office of Hawaiian Affairs came out of there, um ... the notion that ha—uh, Hawaiians would—would—could vote for their own leaders in—in a separate election. And then the ... uh ... the fact that the rev—that OHA's ... operations would be paid for by revenues derived from ceded lands was a really critical uh, interesting um ... dynamic that occurred that—that sets up the ... the dialog today, it—it—it actually gave Hawaiians direct access to the resources. Up until that time, all ceded land revenues, the ceded land trust, uh, were going into the general fund. And the way the ceded lands works—and—and here we get back to the Admissions Act, right? The Admissions Act says, there are five purposes for ceded lands. Uh, [INDISTINCT]. And one of those purposes is the betterment of conditions of native Hawaiian. Another purpose was public education, okay. So it's really clear public education got money from the ceded land trust and the—I forget what the other three are. But uh, it was always explained away that the way Hawa—the betterment of conditions for native Hawaiians was being handled that although the money wasn't going directly to any native Hawaiian or native Hawaiians, not even Hawaiian Homes, that because all Hawaiians went to the public schools, that they—that the trust was being honored, you know, in that way. And that Hawaiians um, uh, uh, were able to access all the public services that everybody else could access. I mean, it was such a ridiculous argument, it was unreal. But then when they created this law that said the Office of Hawaiians Affairs is now entitled to twenty percent of all revenues from the ceded land trust, that created a legal window of opportunity for—through the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to begin to delve into and look at what the revenue stream was, where was the revenue coming from, how is this structured, what about—what about revenue from the airports, what about revenue from the harbors. These are all ceded lands. What about the fact that ceded lands are defined uh, defined by the—by the federal definition, includes all submerged lands. And that uh, and that he um, the twelve-mile limited that the United States uh, uh, exercises jurisdiction in uh, not to mention that beyond the twelve-mile limit there's a second uh, claim—uh, uh, American claim to—to pro—pro—pro—proprietary um, uh, rights which extends two hundred miles uh, off of all—all US coastal waters. And if you take ceded lands, and you look at that jurisdiction, that Hawaiians are now entitled to revenues from submerged lands, ceded lan—you know, which is ceded lands, and OHA was the window that created that legal obligation. So now you know, they're—they're in court

and—and ... so that was important. And that was all, I think, in the aftermath of statehood and our waking up to ... you know, to our failure when we were yu—young.

QUESTION: (32:12)No, I don't think so. For a little bit of background, can you tell us what you do now?

APO: Yeah; I'm director of culture and education for the Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association. Uh, basically, we're—we do a lot of constructing—consulting work with the visitor industry, uh, in ... uh, incorporating Hawaiian values into the operating culture of—not just visitor industry, we do work with other companies too. And by that, I'm talking about values driven operating cultures that um ... um ... that—that tend to soften—I—I keep using the word colonial—tend to soften the harsh effects of colonial business models that, again, come at the expense of sometimes the people and the place.

QUESTION: M-hm.

APO: (32:19)So um ... um ... we—we're concerned about Hawaii's sense of place, about its quality of life, its lifestyle, the impact of tourism, uh, on uh, on not just Hawaiians, but on all of Hawaii's people. So ... I guess you could say that the work that we do is ... we work uh, on many different levels in the visitor industry, trying to effect some changes in the business model and create some paradigm shifts on how they operate. And um, as an example, um, the model in place now, it's a global model, is everything is visitor centered. Okay. Three things you need to make—to have a visitor experience, you gotta have a place, you gotta have a host, and then you have to have the visitor. And the—the business model is always visitor centered. So when you're ... if you pl—play that model long enough, you end up with a Waikiki, where in the re—in the—in the rush to accommodate the creature comforts of the visitor, you begin to change the place. And the place starts to change, until finally it looks like the place the visitor was trying to get away from. The Hawaiian model, or the values driven model say that benefits must accrue to all three in the triangle. Okay; the—the—the—the host has to benefit uh, equally as the visitor, and the place especially has to be—has to benefit. So it's a way of keeping the past connected to the future in a way where the g—where the growth is uh, where everybody wins, and the community can uh, is supported in—in—in celebrating itself and its traditions and its customs. So while it's a Hawaiian organization, you know, we—we really understand that we are multicultural, and that uh, we think we have something to offer the visitor industry. So ...

QUESTION: (34:59)Another theme running through our documentary is the boom that people felt in the economic boom right after statehood. That day—

APO: (35:15)Yeah.

QUESTION: (35:17)--statehood and you know—

APO: (35:18)Yeah.

QUESTION: (35:19)That the first jet airplane landed almost simultaneously with statehood.

APO: (35:26)Yeah; I—I think statehood created a um ... created an investment um ... became uh, a magnet for investment, because then people now felt really safe. I think the territorial status was still a little bit exotic for people who were going to invest uh, you know, um, a lot of money; heavy federal control o—over it. So statehood i—is something that investors tended to understand better and to feel safe. Uh, so uh, you see that going on today, you know, where uh, since 9-11, right, I mean, one of the reasons that we're booming as a tourist economy is people are afraid to go anywhere else [CHUCKLE] uh, outside of the United States, you know. Uh, but ... so I think statehood did have a lot to do with huge dollars beginning to roll in, and uh, uh, more and more attention being focused on Hawaii from investment uh, from offshore uh, and glo—uh, global corporations. So um ... yeah.

QUESTION: (36:32)And that kind of [INDISTINCT] right into [INDISTINCT]. How long has the Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association been here?

APO: (36:39)Uh, we've been uh, 1998 we formally organized. We'd been operating um, informally for about three years uh, before that; 1995.

QUESTION: (36:51)Did that come out of [INDISTINCT].

APO: (36:53)Yeah; it came out of uh, a tremendous concern over the mis—uh, uh, one is the iron—here's the irony. The irony is, we have a host culture and a host population, which is all the other cultures, that embraced the notion of ho'okipa. Okay, the dignity that it brings to you in the artform of welcoming strangers. Right? I mean, we are the greatest hosting society in the world here in Hawaii. We just get it. We—it's innate to our condition as people. So what's wrong with this picture? You have this tremendous gifted host population that is totally distanced and almost irrelevant to the economics of the industry. And we are actually kinda shut out from the industry by this huge wall of commerce that

began to rise, and you created this gatekeeper system. So there is a surrogate host that is basically corporate Hawaii, serves as the surrogate host, and in order for one to access the other you have to go through this gate. And the gate is controlled by—by the corporate sector. And um, now, I'm not saying that the—the—this is not a uh, uh, an indictment of that system, because that's the way it works, large scale tourism everywhere in the world. But we've been absent uh, that model when you play it long enough begins to diminish the value of the—of the destination, as they found out in Waikiki, when people began going to Maui. You know, Oahu became the place you flew over to go to Maui, because we were so dense and—and the expectation wasn't there. Um ... so yeah, so—so the—so the economics of tourism, which is—which is very Western in it—in its model ... we think can be improved. And we're trying to shift the paradigm. Uh, we think local people have a lot more to offer uh, the visitor industry. We think we can bring even more value t the destination. We think we can create a more equal distribution of the wealth that the industry brings in. Uh, and we just—we think we're smarter than they are. Uh, that their colonial model is really—well, for one thing, if they play it out long enough—you know, local people are going—either going to be the solution for the industry in the 21st century or they're gonna be the industry's biggest problem. Uh, there's a—there's—there's a lot of—you know, when I talked about a tension between Hawaiians and the tourism industry, it's not just Hawaiians. It's like local people. But we're really nice people, so you know, we tend to be really patient and we hope things are going to work out. But as—if—if things—if—if the eco—the—the unequal distribution of the wealth continues, and the separation of the haves and the have-nots continue, and you end up with more and more communities where one-third of the community doesn't even live there, but they own all the best houses, and the rest of us ... you know, are—are—are suffering, uh, this cannot—this is not gonna happen for—for a lot longer. And by that, I mean, you know, ten, fifteen, twenty years. So the industry is either going to have to come to grips with the fact that it must embrace us, it has to allow us in, it's got to understand that you know, we understand the bottom line, we're not stupid. We also like wealth, we like to make money. And uh, uh, you know, uh, and we think we have some solutions, we think we can make—create better visitor experiences, that you need—I mean, Lord knows, the last thing we need is another bell and whistle to attract visitors that is not authentic, that is a misa—misappropriation of local culture, uh, uh, you know, in uh, uh, so that somebody can grab onto some visitor's wallet and hang onto it uh, you know, for as long as they can. That we have a lot to bring to the table if they'll just let us in the door. So we try to fight for that; the notion of tourism.

QUESTION: (41:00) Do you think that there's ... in all this discussion about economics, do you think there's a relevancy to Hawaii being a state?

APO: (41:18) I think there's a relevancy to Hawaii ... I think we're too hung up. Maybe we're too Westernized or we're too American and we're hung up on this notion of statehood as in the other forty-nine states. And that ... so few uh, realize that, hey, Guam is part of the United States, they have uh, I—I think they have a uh, uh, commonwealth status. There are these other Pacific island nations that have a relationship with the United States; they're American citizens, but they cut their own deals. Uh, Pala—the Republic of Palau, there's no—n—n—they don't allow any nuclear activity, not even close. There was a major deal when they—when they cut their uh, uh, when they cut their what a call a compact of free association with the United States. The benefits of citizenship, but they got to call their own shots over um, maintaining local control over their coastal waters, local control over the—their exclusive economic zone, local control over what comes in and out of their ports, local control over the question of—of uh, of nuclear and military industrial. Okay. They're all American citizens. They're not called a state; they have their own constitution, and their agreement is called a compact of free association. So uh, Guam is ano—is another one. The uh, the—the uh ... uh, repub—excuse me, what is it, republic—no, uh, commonwealth uh, of the Northern Marianas. Uh, they have commonwealth status. And each of these uh, these political um ... uh, uh, uh ... political categories uh, inherent to them is a different kind of relationship. I see an opportunity for Hawaii, if we can just get past this thing about ... statehood, to redefine our relationship with the United States so that, one, everybody benefits, including the other forty-nine states. For instance, what if we cut a deal—I'm not talking about seceding from the union, I'm talking about keeping our citizenship. What if we cut a new deal that uh, turned all our harbors into free ports. Like Subic Bay. When Subic Bay went out of US jurisdiction and turned into a free port, man, did the dollars begin to roll in for them. [CHUCKLE] Okay. So t his is not rocket science, but we—you know, it's hard for us to think like that, of uh, uh, uh. of free port. If we were to carve out exceptions to our constitutional uh, relationship with the United States that allowed us to, in certain instances, to negotiate with a foreign country as—as a sovereign entity, a s—you know, Hawaii ... um, I—I'm reluctant to call it the Kingdom or—the Nation of Hawaii. Uh, 'cause it has to be an inclusive model, all—all the ethnic groups have to be involved. But there's opportunities uh, uh, economically for us to open some doors that are not open. And then the trick is, you know, some people say well, you know, they're n—they—they're never gonna—um, the Congress is never gonna buy that. Well, they'll buy it if you paid them. You know, if you do uh, uh, a distribution of revenue so that the other forty-nine states get a—get their piece of flesh, of course they're gonna buy

it. Um ... but we don't think uh ... I don't think there's enough thinking that goes into how we can make it work economically, how we can carve out some exceptions to the constitution, keep our citizenship, uh, and create a uh ... a situations of sovereignty. Um, we certainly don't want to uh, uh, take over the issue of public safety. That's something that we gotta—we—you know, we—we have to ... I mean, there's no resources there right now. Public education is a really big one that we need to continue to deal with. So I think moving um ... springing out of statehood and the controversy over the illegal overthrow uh, using the ha—playing the Hawaiian card, the Hawaiian political card uh, as a wedge in the door to redefine the relationship between Hawaii as a political ... geo destination and the United States is something that is ... really provocative and I think is really interesting.

[GENERAL CONVERSATION]

[END]